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Introduction

Performativity refers to the ability to "do things with words" (Austin, 1962). Latour (1996) suggested that management sciences are probably the most performative of all sciences as they design their objects. This piece of research asks what do strategy discourses "do" in an organization and how? Looking at the production, dissemination and consumption of a "knowledge strategy" in a multinational company, we explore how the knowledge strategy discourse and texts are interpreted, appropriated, transformed, and sometimes resisted in ways that influence their performative effect.

Performativity can be defined as the act of bringing into being. Specific utterances have the power of doing so, such as the sentence "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth" pronounced in a naming ceremony. Building on Latour (1986), Feldman and Pentland (2003) distinguish between the performative and the ostensive aspect of a routine. Simply put, the ostensive aspect is the idea; the performative aspect the enactment. The two aspects are recursively related. Cabantous and Gond (2010: 1534) also drawing from Latour (1996) and Callon (2007) suggest a similar definition: "Performativity encompasses the whole set of processes whereby a theory influences the reality it describes and thus increases its verisimilitude and ultimately its social success".

Building on this, we qualify a strategy discourse as performative when it is mirrored in practice. We qualify a discourse as counter-performative when practice is progressively less than how it is depicted. We analyse the performativity of the discourse in relation to the issues of subjectivity (the way discourse and texts are perceived and experienced) and materiality (in terms of a specific range of material possibilities and constraints). Specifically, we study the strategizing of individuals involved in a knowledge sharing initiative, called Quality Technical Standards (referred to as QTS), in the field of product quality control. We examine how their strategizing affects the performativity of the strategy discourse.

This paper stems from a three-year immersion at Constructor, a multinational company in the construction material field. Our overall involvement with Constructor aimed at understanding the production and consumption dynamics of a Knowledge Management strategy (Corbett, 2009). We used a narrative approach to explore the consumption of strategy

from a practice perspective (Czarniawska and Sevon, 1996 ; Corbett & Mounoud, 2011). Building on this earlier work, we now wish to apply this perspective to a specific knowledge initiative in the field of product quality control. In this paper, we introduce the concept of strategic episodes (Hendry and Seidl, 2003) to present the sequential aspect of responses throughout the organization.

The paper is organized as follows. We first review briefly the narrative approach to strategy-as-practice. We then present the research setting and methods, before turning to the stories of strategizing in the labs. We conclude by discussing instances of performativity and counter-performativity of the knowledge strategy discourse. We show the importance of relating the issue of performativity of discourse to the concepts of subjectivity and materiality.

1. A narrative framework for the consumption of strategic discourse

Strategy as practice urged to put practitioners in centre stage, looking at the ways they produce and consume strategy in line with their own agenda and the situation context of action. Discursive approaches have stressed the way consumers - or readers - can resist the hegemonic power of organizational Discourse (with an uppercase « D ») through the subversion of meaning (Kelemen, 2000; Hardy, 2004). Indeed, the original text is often not consumed in the way that its original producers intended (Hardy and Phillips, 2004). Mumby (2005) advocates a dialectical analysis that focuses on the interpretive struggles among discourses and practices, exploring how "social actors attempt to "fix" meanings in ways that resist and/or reproduce extant relations of power. In this context, workplace resistance is "best understood as a *local social production* involving the discursive participation (willing or otherwise) of different organization members" (Mumby, 2005 : 24). Thus, Michel de Certeau (1984) analysing daily practices of consumption showed that under the apparent banality of ordinary gestures and routinized actions lurks an extraordinary creativity. Individuals show a great capacity for making do (*bricolage*). Analysed superficially, certain routine behaviours reveal a form of submission; in another way, they show experimentation with resistance and creativity. We refer here to practice as meaning both "the situated doings of individual human beings (micro) and the different socially defined practices (macro) that the individuals are drawing upon in these doings" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 7).

Johnson et al. (2003) call for linking macro phenomena with micro explanations. They invite researchers to "put the micro in the macro" and remind them to locate micro-studies in

their wider context. “[Such studies] need to span levels: the level of individual interaction, the organizational level, the level of the organization's context.” (p. 17). Indeed, in this approach, practice is seen as occurring “within a coexistent and fluid interplay between contexts” (Jarzabkowski, 2004).

Strategizing, the “doing of strategy”, occurs at the interconnection between praxis (socially accomplished flows of activity), practices (resources and artefacts that actors draw upon in their practice) and practitioners (the actors who shape the construction of practice). Thus, applying the strategy-as-practice framework to management ideas and practices allows us to consider how some practices and ideas are brought into the organization by the institutional environment and how different actors in the organization, through who they are, how they act and what resources they draw upon, consume these management practices and produce situated practice. It can be argued though that management discourses such as KM do not belong to the realm of strategic activities. Indeed in this research, we use the strategy-as-practice framework as an analogy that allowed us to conceptualize the consumption/production dynamics of a specific management practice – knowledge management- on multiple levels. We consider that popular management ideas and practices fit the definition of what Paula Jarzabkowski (2004) calls management practice-in-use i.e. “those management tools and techniques present in macro-institutional and competitive contexts, arising from co-production within different communities of practice, that is, industry, academia, consultancy, and the press, each with some common points of discourse. They are diffused through the teachings and research of business schools, their use by consultancy firms, and through management fashion (Abrahamson 1996), in which the popular press plays a part (Mazza and Alvarez 2000).”

Combining Certeau’s work on the practice of consumption with Paul Ricoeur’s concept of emplotment, we developed a narrative framework for analyzing the consumption of knowledge management (KM) ideas at the individual (personal stories) and organizational (collective history) levels. We look at the consumption of management ideas not only in terms of discourse vs. practice (adopting vs. using), but also in terms of organizational and individual experiences.

Certeau ties practice to consumption, (whether consumer goods or written materials (texts), that is to reading. In a similar vein, for Ricœur, reading is a creative activity that prolongs the creation of writing: "*To read is, in any hypothesis, to conjoin a new discourse to the discourse of the text*" (Ricœur, 1983: 220). Ricœur developed a narrative theory for understanding the human experience of time. Human time, for Ricœur, is experienced both as cosmological time

(the objective chronology of events) and phenomenological time (time as it is experienced by individuals). Narrative emplotment weaves together these two representations of time.
This led us to develop a narrative framework for the consumption, and production of a knowledge strategy (table 1).

Table 1: A narrative framework for the consumption and production of a knowledge strategy

PLOTS	HISTORY (strategy)	STORIES (tactics)
Adoption	***1. Policy:*** *Adopting ideas from the institutional environment: producing policy.*	***4. Practice as knowing:*** *consuming policies and producing practice.*
Use	***2. Procedures****: Management ideas-in-use.*	***3. Practice as doing****: consuming procedures and producing practice.*

The two lines refer to the two facets of consumption: adoption and use while the two columns refer to the two dimensions of human time described by Ricœur: chronological time (history) and human time (stories). Organizational history belongs to the realm of strategy. Accordingly, the plots in this first column are told from the point of view of "subjects of will and power" (Certeau) who can shape the social environment.

In column two, phenomenological time gives way to the users' stories that tell how individuals at different levels of the organization adopted and used management ideas. In quadrant 3, we see how individuals actually used the procedures. Focusing on the micro-practices of daily activity, we highlight the many tactics through which employees "turn to their own ends forces alien to them" (Certeau, 1984: XIX). These tales of making-do highlight the creativity of consumption. Consumption, then, is a second-order production.

Practice is the art of combination: "A way of thinking invested in a way of acting ... which cannot be dissociated from an art of using" (Certeau 1984: xv). For analytical purposes, we shall separately consider these two elements of practice: a way of thinking and an art of using. We shall call the first "practice as knowing", thus alluding to the intersubjective production of sense and meaning. Practice as knowing, also called knowing in practice (Gherardi, 2000) is key to understanding the reasons that induce a group of actors to continuously and repetitively practice, adjusting their activities to ongoing changes and moulding their doing to the situational rationality of the context in which they interact

(Gherardi, 2008). Practices, in this sense, are meaningful for practitioners as they can be objects of love or hate; and indubitably constitute emotionally involving relations (Gherardi, 2008). We shall call the second "practice as doing", referring to the many tactics through which users turn alien forces to their own ends.

In quadrant 4, stories of adoption show how individuals read the policies imposed on them by top management. These stories highlight the plurality of meanings attributed to the policy as individuals read it differently, depending on who they are and what they do.

The paper focuses on quadrants three and four.

2. Research setting and methods

Constructor is a world leading group in construction material. It has undergone rapid and sustained growth in the past decades, going from 30 plants located in 3 countries in the 1970s, to 163 plants in 46 countries in 2008. This expansion strategy is accompanied by the setting up of regional assistance centres (RAC), pools of mutualised resources whose main mission is to bring technical assistance to the local units and to speed up the integration process of newly acquired plants.

In response to the local nature of the building industry, the company developed a multilocal management concept. The local nature of the industry is acknowledged through a decentralized organization: the plants are grouped in 10 different world regions that enjoy considerable strategic autonomy. At the same time, headquarters play a strong coordination role, especially in the matter of technical expertise. In addition to the traditional functions of headquarters, Constructor set up technical headquarters whose mission is to *"lead the technical community towards the maximization of plant performances and the development of technical knowledge"* (company intranet). Indeed, improving plant performances is the key driver of Constructor's strategy. Faced with a growing number of plants and very diverse performance levels, one of the most pressing challenges is to organize the technical expertise function bearing in mind the industry's competitive context: driving all plants towards sustained performance and cutting down on costs.

In such a context, knowledge management's promises of productivity gains and cost reduction through the capture and dissemination of knowledge did not fall on deaf ears. Hence, Constructor organized technical expertise around two levers:

- A human lever through the concentration of engineers, called experts, in assistance centres in each world region (Africa, America, Asia, and Europe).

The experts' main mission is to bring technical assistance to the plants in their region. They are also the main actors in the codification of Best Practices, intended to help plants apply the group's knowledge and increase performance. The Assistance Centres report to the technical headquarters.

- A technological lever through the use of KM tools (an intranet) and practices (codified Best Practices) in order to capture and disseminate the group's collective know-how. A Knowledge Management team, the Construction Know-How Centre (CKC), located at the technical headquarters, is responsible for ensuring the communication and exchange of knowledge and know-how, as well as the proper use of the knowledge management tools.

Data collection methods

The data discussed in this paper derive from the first author's three-year immersion at Constructor's Technical headquarters as a member of the Construction Know-How Centre. She was able to follow the Quality Technical Standard initiative from its beginning, attending experts' network meetings and going to Regional Assistance centres and plants to witness the QTS diffusion and implementation.

Our perspective is interpretive (Geertz, 1973; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006). For that purpose, our method is based on story-writing. The researcher becomes narrator to tell the stories of how individual members at different levels of the organization (central, regional, local) consumed and produced the KM discourse and practices.

Inspired by Pettigrew (1979, 1987, 1990) we developed a longitudinal, contextualist and processual study which combined retrospective and real-time data collection. Altogether, we covered more than 20 years of KM initiatives at Constructor, going as far back in time as 1983. The retrospective study (1997-2005) set the context for the launch of the current KM initiative. The real-time study (2005-2008) allowed us to see a management practice-in use. A contextualist analysis offers a multi-level approach where the content, context and processes of the phenomenon under study are inextricably bound and interconnected in historical, present and future time.

Summary of data set for the QTS initiative (real time study)

Table 2: Non-participant observation

October 2006 : Experts' network meeting (Lab'Net): writing the Quality Technical Standards
May 2007 : QTS training session in plant (France)

June 2007 : Experts'network conference call : QTS roll-out
Sept. 2007 : Expert's network meeting : QTS roll-out assessment
Nov. 2007: Eastern Europe RAC mission: follow up of QTS implementation in two Jordan plants.
April 2008 : America RAC Quality Days (USA) : 3-day meeting with RAC Quality experts and plant quality managers to assess the QTS implementation.

Table 3 : Interviews :

Sub units	**Number**
Technical headquarters	3
Europe –Africa Assistance Centre	5
Central Europe Assistance Centre	3
America Assistance Centre	3
Asia Assistance Centre	2
Plants	3
Total	**19**

Strategic episodes

In this paper, we use the concept of strategic episodes (Hendry and Seidl, 2003) to tell our stories of strategizing within technical regulation. The concept of episode stems from Luhman's social system theory and his treatment of change within a recursively-reproduced system of practice. Episodes, in Luhmann's theory, provide a mechanism by which a system can suspend its routine structures and so initiate a reflection on and change of these structures (Hendry and Seidl, 2003, p.175). They are defined as sequences of communication, structured in terms of beginning and ending. Each episode provides a switch from the previous context. The switch can be temporal (before- after), but also discursive (different context of communication) or conceptual (change of reference point, shared assumptions). Thus, episodes provide a rigorous way of isolating and exploring changing structures.

Episodes have been reconstructed based on field diaries, interviews and the author's monograph of the organization.

Each episode provides a brief narrative of the sequence. It also highlights who is involved (practitioner), resources (materiality and subjectivity issues), and connects to the wider praxis, thus providing a framework that is consistent with the three pillars of the strategy-as-practice perspective.

For Constructor, sharing best practices and standardizing production methods is seen as a key driver for group performance and as such is part of the strategy discourse. This reference to standards and norms rings familiar for Constructor's employees in the field of quality. Construction material is used for building bridges, houses, roads... Poor quality could

lead to hazards such as buildings crumbling down. Therefore, the material has to meet national specifications in terms (for example) of composition, strength, durability and resistance. Beyond the national specifications enacted by each country, there are also more global standards set by regional agencies such as the European Union (EN standards) or ASTM international (formerly American society for testing and materials). Here, we tell the story of the production, diffusion and consumption of the Quality Technical Standarsds. It all started, when the Quality VP mobilized the corporate discourse and the field of quality 's inclination for technical standards to gain strategic momentum for the quality control activity.

3. Strategizing in the labs

Plant labs are in charge of product quality control. Their role is at the crossroads of several activities: marketing & sales, process, production. They become key in case of customer complaints regarding product quality, the culprit is the lab which didn't analyse the product properly. Yet, the lab is seen as standing in the way of production: quality control procedures get in the way of high-volume production. Besides, can we trust the lab's analysis? The plant lab is seen as a cost with low return on investment. Traditionally, the plant lab is seen as a "retiring home" for operators worn out by heavy physical duties. Tacit know-how used to be transmitted from junior to senior through companionship, but it sometimes also transmitted errors. Anyway, in many plants today, dwindling lab staff numbers and high turnover rates now make it impossible. Furthermore, increasing costs are linked to problems in product quality, some quality incidents even receiving widespread media coverage. It is against this background that the VP Products & Quality decides to launch quality technical standards and to monitor quality control activity with a specific performance indicator.

Episode 1: Creating the momentum for Quality.

Who: Product VP

At Constructor, knowledge sharing between the different units spread out across the world takes place through formal expert networks. These networks bring together directors of expertise at technical headquarters (HQ) and regional experts to work on specific subjects, share knowledge and experience, produce state-the -art practices in the aim of transferring these to local plants. The Product and Quality VP decides to set up a new Quality network dedicated to lab analytical measures, called Labnet.

Labnet's first task is to assess lab performance in all the plants. To do this, the same product sample is sent to all the plant labs. All together, 20 tons are sent! All plants are asked to carry out the same analytical results and to report their results to HQ. The results obtained by the main Lab, located at headquarters, serve as reference. A Lab Accuracy Index is thus obtained. All plant labs are ranked depending on their proximity to the reference.
This round robin test shows that one-third of plants are below the performance standards set by HQ. Communication of the first Lab Accuracy Index (LAI) results creates a shock-wave in the organisation. "It's not very pleasant for Business Unit managers when the rankings are shown in a general meeting (…). That's when they really got down working," recalled the Product & Quality VP. Thus, the creation of a new performance indicator and wide communication of the results at the highest level enabled the issue of plant labs to be on the agenda of Business Unit managers. Product Quality Control was now treated seriously. It was time to act.
Materiality: a new key performance indicator, the Lab Accuracy Index(LAI)
Subjectivity: Gaining legitimacy for the quality activity

Episode 2: The solution to the "Lab problem": standardizing methods
Who: Product & Quality VP, Lab net' experts
Now that the problem has received attention, it is time to come up with a solution. For Labnet, standardizing analytical methods is essential. Just as there are international or national standards for product quality, plants should also abide to the newly defined group standards called Quality Technical Standards (QTS). These standards should be meta-standards, i.e. they should meet the requirements of any national or international regulation. The name of Quality Technical Standards has been chosen precisely to remind the Constructor's quality community that strict compliance with these standard is a mandatory as a specification edited by European standards (EN) or North-American standards (ASTM). The network draws up a list of the most important reference methods that each plant lab should master and starts writing down the first and most complex of the methods: XRF analysis.
Materiality: An in-house meta standard, the Quality Technical Standard.
Subjectivity: Legitimacy is achieved by using the practices of the quality community: technical standards. Normative perspective (prescription)

Strategizing 3: One size fits all
Who: Labnet experts

Quality issues are now high on the agenda of BU managers, it is essential that Labnet makes the most of the momentum and that the first method is published and disseminated quickly. Participants say they will never forget the first writing seminar. It was a painful birth. For three days, 10 hours a day, experts were locked up at a hotel and haggled over each word of the final version of the QTS. The objective? To ensure that each step was applicable in any plant lab, whatever the country, and that it can respond to any objection raised by plant lab analysts.

Materiality: codification of Quality Technical Standard

Subjectivity: Time pressure, the impossible consensus, individual frustration and pain.

Episode 4: Disseminating

Who: Product & Quality VP

The Product & Quality VP is convinced that to be accepted and implemented the QTS need to have the support from BU managers. A letter, signed by the Head of Technical HQ is sent out to BU managers and Regional TC managers. The letter restates the importance of implementing QTS for improving plant performance. The QTS are presented as "Mandatory Best Practices". The plant Quality Manager will be in charge of implementing the QTS, with the support of the TC quality experts.

When writing the QTS, the experts network also developed a toolkit including a powerpoint presentation of the standard, and a self-assessment test to be carried out by each plant lab.

Materiality: Common tools: powerpoint presentation, self-assessment test

Subjectivity: Prescription /hierarchy

Episode 5: Zooming in on regional practice

Thus equipped, each expert was sent to roll-out the QTS in his or her world region. The experts had autonomy in choosing the approach for disseminating the standard. The network would meet again in a few months to evaluate the roll-out in the different regions.

- **Europe-Africa**: The QTS has been launched just before the Quality Convention for the European and African regions: the timing is perfect. The Quality Convention is the ideal venue for spreading the word about the QTS to all the quality managers attending. Besides, the assistance centre is undertaking a series of audits in all the plants labs. "We saw that the QTS was totally within the scope of our audits. During our audits, we would also check the QTS implementation and provide some on the spot training if needs be" reported a Quality expert. A year later however, the Assistance Centre had to

admit that things had not progressed as expected. The top-down approach, targeting the quality manager, had not reached the lab analyst and technicians, who would actually be implementing the QTS. The Assistance Centre realized that stating that the standards were mandatory was not enough to enforce their implementation, and they switched to communicating, training and coaching on the QTS. As for the quality staff in plants, they explained that implementation had been stalled by lack of budget to purchase the equipment, lack of trained staff or higher priorities in the plant.

Materiality: existing Quality audits, plant constraints in terms of budget, time, priorities.

Subjectivity:

- Initial assumption: The QTS shall not disturb the RAC routine. The QTS will fit right into the Quality Convention topics and in the plant labs auditing routine. “Mandatory” label should be enough to convince to implement the QTS.
- Switch to developing a specific approach for plant implementation.

- **Central Europe**: In this region, the expert opted for training lab managers and technicians focusing on practical tips for implementing the QTS. Follow-up is monitored at distance through the evaluation of the lab control charts. Whenever the expert receives a control chart from one of the plant labs, she sends it back to the lab analyst with comments on how to interpret the chart and suggestions for corrective actions. In plants, where the competency level is low, the expert went to visit the plant and coach the lab manager and his team on how to implement the QTS. This was the case in Jordan.

Materiality: Control chart as a boundary object between the lab and the expert. Off-site yet personalised support.

Subjectivity: Belief that plant staff can implement QTS if given adequate support.

- **America:** The approach is quite similar to Central Europe. The experts developed a series of tools (newsletter, detailed self-assessment, simplified version of the standard) designed to help plants implement the QTS on their own. For plants lacking competence, a lab coach from the Assistance Centre was assigned to help them.

Materiality: importance of tools and off-site support

Subjectivity: The QTS in its official form is too complex for plant staff, the tools provided don’t get into the nitty-gritty aspects of plant lab routines. Therefore, it needs to be adapted .

- **Asia**: In Asia, the QTS fit into the Quality Control Improvement Programme which the Assistance Centre had launched recently. This program involved among other things: frequent plant visits from regional experts, strict monitoring of lab performance through a number of KPIs and of the operators' performance and on the spot training on any operator needing to improve. The quality expert described this approach as "keeping the momentum high…We don't want to leave any gaps between plant visits".
Materiality: Quality Control Programme and KPIs to control plant labs and in return offer adequate support for improving practice.
Subjectivity: Importance of keeping the pressure on the plant labs. Prescription.

Episode 6: From autonomy to standardization

Who: Assistance Centre experts

Initially, each Assistance Centre had much leeway to devise the most appropriate approach for diffusing the standards in their region. Some started with top-down communication and quality audits, before switching to hands-on training when they realized that they had not targeted the right people for implementing the standard. Others introduced tools to provide technical assistance off-site: a technical newsletter, more detailed presentation of the standards. Others still developed monitoring and reporting tools to assess the level of implementation. All Assistance Centres delivered training and one-to-one coaching on the Standards.

After assessing the different approaches, the Product and Quality VP, decided to standardize the diffusion process. The tools and practices developed by the Asian Assistance Centre, the centre putting the most pressure for plants to abide with the QTS, were to be adopted by the other assistance centres.
Materiality: common tools, setting implementation schedule
Subjectivity: standardization, increasing prescription.

Episode 7: Users' stories

Who: Plant quality staff

Implementation of the first QTS in plants suffered delays due to the time required to purchase the needed material. Besides, improving analytical methods was not high on most plants' agendas, and they adopted a "wait and see" attitude. However, when the plants' quality staff realized this ostrich strategy would not work, they reacted in different ways.

Under coaching and heavy supervision from the regional Assisstance Centres, some plants had no choice but to comply with the Standards. Thus, in the Asian region, the expert described his approach to rolling-out the QTS in the plant as "keeping the momentum high": monthly visits to the plant, on-the spot training, and regular performance assessments all led the plants in that region to implement the Standards without further delay. In other regions, initial resistance gradually gave way to compliance as plant staff saw the value that the QTS could bring to their practice. This was the case in Central Europe when lab analysts understood how to interpret the control charts.

Other plants tried to negotiate the contents of the Technical Standards, trying to convince the experts that their own practices were just as good. In a few instances however, initial indifference to the Technical HQ injunction turned into active resistance. Thus, a wind of revolt blew over the Convention for the North American region. Plant quality managers resorted to several arguments to resist the implementation of the Standards. Like their counterparts in other world regions, they insisted on their lack of resources, be it money or people: *« They give you an implementation schedule, but it creates frustration: you don't have the money, but they say "Do it anyhow*!" They strongly felt the contradictions between the pressure for a lean, budget-cutting organization and the requirements of QTS implementation. They portrayed themselves as powerless. Quality was not a priority on the agenda of their hierarchy and they got no support: *« I've asked for years for resources and it falls on deaf ears. Are they informed, the Plant Manager, the VP Manufacturing? Will they listen to us?"* They questioned the contents of the document and the legitimacy of its authors: "*These people, did they ever work in a plant?"*

Meanwhile, at technical headquarters, the Product &Quality VP moved on to another position. His successor is the very expert from Asia where the injunction to abide by the standards was strongest. The expert networks keeps codifying new standards and setting schedules for the plants to implement them. However, the diffusion effort of the QTS in plants has slowed down as new priorities came along. Quality staff in plants is reluctantly trying to keep up with the flow of new quality technical standards, but quality issues have left the front stage.

Discussion and conclusion

These stories show how individuals at different organizational levels accounted for the knowledge strategy discourse and practices.

Regional Assistance Centres:

One might have expected the Assistance Centre experts, who were the authors of the QTS and who spent hours in network meetings trying to reach consensus, to be at pains to see the plants implement the QTS. It was not the case. The Assistance Centre experts distanced themselves from documents that they did not recognize as their own. Either, because reaching an agreement had required them to give in on so many points that they did not agree with the results of the collective compromise, or because they did not see much connection between this network activity, the demands of plants and their own activity. Knowledge sharing was a fine discourse as long as it did not interfere with the Assistance Centre experts' daily job. As one interviewee put it to us, *"Our priority is to improve plants' performance. I have clear instructions from my boss not to waste too much time in the codification networks."*

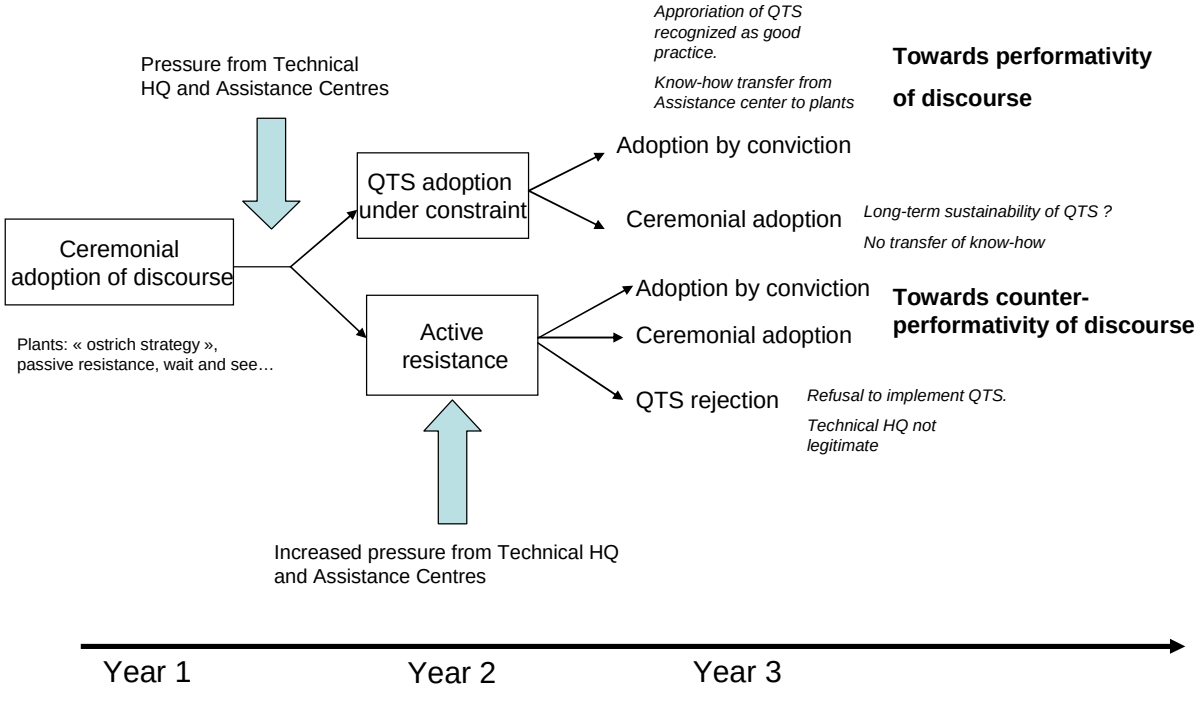
Plants:

In North America, when the Technical HQ adopted a more prescriptive attitude towards the mandatory implementation of QTS, the plants' indifference or passivity turned into more active resistance. Plant technical managers went to great pains to demonstrate that the QTS just didn't adapt to their specific context. It worked and the concept of "mandatory" became an inside joke. Indeed, here was the rub: *"These standards are fine as long as you don't have to run a plant,"* said a technician on one of our plant visits. The KM practices were seen as belonging to an ideal world, that of Headquarters, remote from the constraints of plant life.

Indeed the knowledge strategy discourse and accoompanying practices (QTS) are consumed and interpreted by individuals in light of their own objectives (autonomy, training and coaching) which produces situated practice and is expressed through making-do, bricolage and resistance tactics.

Figure 1 depicts the different responses to the knowledge strategy discourse and practices at Constructor.

Figure 1: Consumption of the QTS discourse and practices at Constructor.



This case highlights the diversity of responses to the knowledge strategy discourse. Performativity of the discourse is far from spontaneous. At best, it is progressively built. One might distinguish a performative path, where legitimacy for the QTS is gradually gained: support from the regional assistance centre overcomes the initial "wait and see" attitude and leads to change and acceptation. On the contrary, along the counter-performative path, the injunction to implement the QTS remains ceremonial, is initially met with a polite "yes" and as the pressure grows, gradually turns to resistance and rejection of the QTS.

Analysing the performativity of the knowledge strategy discourse in terms of materiality and subjectivity allows going beyond the usual explanations for the failure of KM such as mere management fad, discourse/practice gap, lack of users' involvement in the development of the tools, and so on. At the end of the 1990s, Knowledge Management was presented as a strategy to manage an organization's intellectual capital. Information and communication technology now allowed knowledge to be accessible "anytime, anywhere". Multinational companies saw KM as a way to rationalize the creation, dissemination and use

of knowledge. Thus, Constructor saw cost-cutting and productivity gains in the introduction of KM. Expertise and know-how no longer depended on a few key people, they were now codified in Best Practices such as the QTS and widely accessible. This case however shows that the discourse on cost-saving is counter-performative. Initiatives for capturing and disseminating collective knowledge do not work when seen as a means to rationalize and streamline local practice. Subjectivity, i.e. the meanings that practitioners attribute to the initiative and how they relate to it depend on their activity and professional identity, will affect the performativity of the knowledge strategy. Similarly, material conditions are essential in predicting the success or failure of the QTS initiative. The availability of training and coaching, time, lab equipment, budget will make or break the performativity of the QTS discourse.

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